

House Bill 1155 Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model

Health and Government Operations Committee

March 14, 2023

Position: SUPPORT

The Mental Health Association of Maryland is a nonprofit education and advocacy organization that brings together consumers, families, clinicians, advocates and concerned citizens for unified action in all aspects of mental health and substance use disorders. **House Bill 1155 is a priority bill for MHAMD and our Children's Behavioral Health Coalition.**

Mental health concerns represent a significant threat to the future potential of Maryland's youth; this rising public health crisis exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic underscores the need for deep investment in, and exploration of, new practices and models from around the country and the globe. We appreciate that this Committee has shown leadership in the need for true behavioral health systems reform in Maryland.

HB 1155 recognizes the need for youth and families to be at the table at all levels of systems reform, program design and implementation. The lived experience of youth and families navigating mental health and substance use systems should be given equal value to the expertise of those with professional or educational backgrounds. Decision making power should be shared, and the design methods utilized should support the active participation of all impacted parties. The Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model would guide Maryland in the integration of youth and service recipient expertise in our behavioral health system.

A recently released 2022 interagency report¹ highlighted the important role of prevention and early intervention programs, using the integrated youth mental health model, and which are youth-led and co-designed. These programs are an innovative approach to eliminating stigma and other barriers that discourage youth from accessing behavioral health care and other resources that can divert youth from the juvenile justice system. The report recommended that Maryland explore youth co-designed integrated behavioral health models as a way of reducing

¹ Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services (November 1, 2022). Report on Youth-Centered Behavioral Health Intervention and Prevention Programs.
https://dlslibrary.state.md.us/publications/JCR/2022/2022_255-256.pdf

juvenile justice involvement, including a multi-layered group to start the planning and development process, which this bill addresses.

Community-based prevention and early intervention programs that are youth-led and youth-co-designed are increasing in popularity internationally and across the United States, and they are gaining recognition as an innovative approach to eliminating stigma and other barriers that discourage and prevent youth from accessing mental health and substance use services. Youth co-design² is a process which involves people in the decisions that will have an impact on them. The youth co-design model means that youth are not only the recipient of services but are partners in all elements of that service, including implementation, evaluation, and the evolution of services. Based on the principles of participatory design, youth co-design models center on the core beliefs that everyone should have the right to participate in the decisions that impact on their life, and that everyone has valuable knowledge to contribute to a design process.³ In co-design, lived experience and local knowledge have equal value to professional expertise and scientific evidence. It is not who holds the knowledge that is important, but the knowledge itself that really matters.

The term co-design is often mistakenly used to describe any type of participation activity. Co-design represents the highest level of participation where decision-making power is shared between professionals and people who use services; the participation of service users goes beyond providing information to professionals who then make decisions on their behalf. Young people and families with lived experience are given the opportunity to actively participate in the design process. Their role should include helping to shape the desired outcomes, generating and testing ideas, and helping to decide how these ideas can shape the design and delivery of services. By treating young people as equal partners, they are acknowledged for their knowledge and skills, and the value they can add to the development of new services and solutions.

Integrated youth mental health care is an enhanced primary care model offering soft entry to care with access barriers minimized. The key features⁴ are:

- Youth (and family) participation and co-design at all levels, enabling youth-friendly, stigma-free cultures of care providing what young people and their families really need.

² Orygen (2019). *Co-Designing With Young People: The Fundamentals*. <https://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/Service-knowledge-and-development/Guidelines/Co-designing-with-young-people-The-fundamentals/Orygen-Co-designing-with-YP-the-fundamentals?ext=>

³ The Co-Design Initiative (2016). *Co-design: Shared perspectives on authentic co-design*. The Co-Design Initiative. <https://auspwn.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/codesign-sharedperspectives-report-vf1-5-040616.pdf>

⁴ McGorry, P., et al. (February 21, 2022). Designing and Scaling up Integrated Youth Mental Health Care. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8751571/>

- Integration of mental health, physical health, substance use treatment, and vocational support.
- A single, visible trusted location, a “one stop shop” or “integrated practice unit”⁵ with providers organized as a dedicated team of clinical and non-clinical (e.g., peer worker) personnel providing the full spectrum of care around the young person and their family.
- Seamless linkages with services for younger children and adults.

As the General Assembly considers historic investments in restoring our system of behavioral health services for youth, we urge that young people and service recipients be involved at all levels of the process. The Workgroup on Establishing a Youth Codesigned Integrated Behavioral Health Model would be uniquely positioned to help guide Maryland as a leader in this space, bringing truly meaningful stakeholder expertise into these processes. MHAMD and our Children’s Behavioral Health Coalition are in strong support of HB1155 and urge a favorable report on this critical bill.

For more information contact:

Margo Quinlan, Director of Youth & Older Adult Policy: 410-236-5488 / mquinlan@mhamd.org

⁵ Eccles RG, Serafeim G. (May 2013). *The Performance Frontier: Innovating For A Sustainable Strategy*. Harvard Business Review. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23898735/>

